

07/13/21 Tuesday

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

EU Will Deploy Military Force to Mozambique as Rwanda, SADC Also Send Troops to Fight Rebels  
by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)

Mozambique's ability to adequately fund government ministries - including its military - has been hamstrung by tight fiscal rules imposed by the International Monetary Fund as conditions for accepting loans. Now, Maputo must reluctantly invite foreign forces onto its territory, something its fiercely independent government has long resisted doing.

The European Union has created a two-year military force it will deploy to Mozambique to train that country's troops amid a growing insurgency in Cabo Delgado province. The news comes as several African nations prepare to send their own forces - and fears that all the deployments could butt heads.

According to a [Monday statement](#) by the European Union, the mandate will initially last for two years, during which the EU Training Mission Mozambique (EUTM Mozambique) will "support the capacity building of the units of the Mozambican armed forces that will be part of a future Quick Reaction Force."

"The aim of the mission is to train and support the Mozambican armed forces in protecting the civilian population and restoring safety and security in the Cabo Delgado province," the statement added. It did not say the size of the force that would be sent, which will be [led by Portugal](#), the former colonial power from which Mozambique won independence in 1975.

Mozambique's northern Cabo Delgado Province is home to the country's most valuable natural resources, including rubies and liquid natural gas - but also to an insurgency that has steadily grown since 2017, in large part fueled by the pressures put on the region's impoverished Muslim population by new mining exploration and construction projects. Nearly 3,000 people have been killed in the violence, which has sent another 800,000 fleeing to safety, and the cash-strapped Mozambican military has struggled to put down the revolt, even with the help of hired mercenary groups.

Reluctantly, Maputo has called on its international partners for help, including Portugal and the South African Development Community (SADC), which maintains a mutual defense pact. However, it's also reached out to other African nations, including Rwanda, which pre-empted SADC by sending a separate force to Cabo Delgado last week.

A Maze of Foreign Armies

The Rwandan Ministry of Defense [announced on July 9](#) it was sending a force of 1,000 troops to help "to restore Mozambican state authority by conducting combat and security operations, as well as stabilisation and security-sector reform (SSR)."

"The Joint Force commanded by Maj Gen Innocent Kabandana, will work closely with Mozambique Armed Defence Forces (FADM) and forces from the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in designated sectors of responsibility," the MoD said.

However, some members of SADC don't seem quite so optimistic about that forecast. In a Saturday interview with South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), South African Defense Minister Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula said it was "unfortunate" that Kigali had jumped the gun, because it was anticipated Rwandan troops would have gone in under a SADC mandate. Rwanda is not a member of the bloc.

That said, African Union Commission chair [Moussa Faki Mohamat praised](#) Kigali's deployment as "a strong and concrete act of African solidarity to support a fellow Member State fight terrorism and insecurity."

The first scout elements of [SADC's standby force](#) are expected to be deployed to Cabo Delgado on July 15, but Mapisa-Nqakula said much still must be ironed out, including which nation will lead the 3,000-strong standby brigade. According to South African outlet [Daily Maverick](#), SADC planners had expected it would be led by a South African general, with a colonel from Botswana as their deputy. However, Mozambican President Felipe Nyusi [has remained adamant](#) that all troops in Mozambique will be under Mozambican command.

Under separate deals, Portugal and the United States have also both sent military instructors to train Mozambican forces, although Lisbon has committed to sending a force of 1,500 this year.

Drilling and Daesh

Cabo Delgado is one of Mozambique's poorest provinces and home to most of the country's Muslim minority. As [frustration over land evictions](#) and exploitative multinational mining firms has boiled over, disaffected youth have taken up arms, first against police, then against civilian targets. They call themselves Ansar as-Sunna but are known locally as 'Al-Shabab'\* ("the youth" in Arabic); they are not affiliated with the Somali group of the same name. However, the group has declared its allegiance to Daesh\*, but [experts say the claim](#) is purely formal, and there are no demonstrable material links between the Cabo Delgado rebels and the terrorist group in Iraq and Syria.

Only after the [threat to the LNG](#) projects - and the likelihood of a future [LNG supply crunch](#) - was made palpable did the European Union show serious interest in what was happening in Mozambique. The projects are some of Africa's largest, totalling some \$50 billion in investments by Total, ExxonMobil, Eni, and China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC).

In April, Total declared [force majeure](#) on its \$20 billion project at Afungi after al-Shabab stormed the port city of Palma, briefly capturing it, killing 55 people and sending half the city's 75,000 people fleeing to safety.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

Photos: UK, US Aircraft Carriers Run Joint Drills in Gulf of Aden on Queen Elizabeth's First Mission

by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)

The largest warship the United Kingdom has ever sailed, the HMS Queen Elizabeth, is intended to cement the declining colonial power's place in 21st century geopolitics and signal that London

is a reliable partner for the United States, even as the UK has pulled out of other agreements, such as the European Union.

The British Royal Navy's HMS Queen Elizabeth has linked up with a US aircraft carrier and amphibious assault ship for joint drills in the Gulf of Aden as the UK flagship continues its maiden patrol toward the South China Sea.

The British aircraft carrier, and its Dutch Royal Navy escort, the frigate Eversten, met up with the Ronald Reagan carrier strike group in the western Arabian Sea on Monday for a "large scale joint interoperability exercise," according to a [Pentagon news release](#).

Also sailing in the joint task force were a Duke-class frigate, two Arleigh Burke-class destroyers, a Ticonderoga-class guided missile cruiser, and the Wasp-class landing helicopter dock USS Iwo Jima, itself a form of aircraft carrier, albeit also armed with thousands of US Marines and their amphibious assault equipment.

Together, the force could put nearly 150 aircraft into the air, many of them variants of the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter. Some of the jets on the Queen Elizabeth are [piloted by US Marines](#), which deployed with the warship on its first patrol, so that the warship will have a full complement of aircraft. London has only received a handful of the 48 F-35Bs that it has ordered.

According to the Pentagon release, the joint strike force's "combined, bilateral surface, air and sub-surface exercise ... focused on the full spectrum of maritime warfare operations, practicing anti-air warfare (AAW), anti-surface warfare (ASUW), and anti-submarine warfare (ASW) tactics and procedures."

The drills are being carried out close to several important regions, including Yemen, where a Saudi-led coalition is locked in a six-year-long war with the Shiite Ansarullah movement; Somalia, where the US has been fighting the terrorist group al-Shabaab; and Ethiopia, where Washington [has recently said](#) the struggle by Ethiopian and Eritrean forces against the Tigray People's Liberation Front amounts to "ethnic cleansing." It's also not far from Iran or Afghanistan, the latter of which First Sea Lord Admiral [Tony Radakin noted](#) in May the Queen Elizabeth's aircraft could bomb if necessary.

The Queen Elizabeth is on its way to the Pacific Ocean, where it will be "flying the flag for Global Britain - projecting our influence, signalling our power, engaging with our friends, and reaffirming our commitment to addressing the security challenges of today and tomorrow," as British Defense Secretary [Ben Wallace described](#) the deployment in April.

Based in Yokosuka, Japan, the Reagan is also typically confined to Pacific waters, but has come westward to provide additional cover for US troops amid the final [withdrawal from Afghanistan](#), which is expected to be complete next month.

With its signature dual command islands, the Queen Elizabeth isn't quite the size of the massive Nimitz-class warship it was sailing alongside, but is still considered one of the most formidable warships afloat and significantly larger than any carrier previously used by the British Royal Navy.

"The aircraft carrier is the ultimate expression of global maritime power," UK Royal Navy Commodore Steve Moorhouse, commander of the carrier's strike group, said in the news release. "Queen Elizabeth, Ronald Reagan, and Iwo Jima symbolize the might of the US and UK partnership, and the ease with which our naval and air forces can combine here in the Gulf of Aden, or anywhere else in the world."

However, heading to the Pacific, the Queen Elizabeth will soon be in the waters of a dangerous adversary: China's People's Liberation Army, which has long worked to perfect an arsenal of ultra-long-range [anti-ship missiles](#) and hypersonic weapons capable of overwhelming the carrier's - or indeed, any warship's - defenses and delivering a knockout blow.

While London has given its support to the sovereignty-challenging "Freedom of Navigation Operations" [performed by the US](#) and other nations in the South China Sea, Wallace said the carrier's deployment was not intended to be "provocative," but would indicate London's willingness to "play an active role in shaping the international system of the 21st century."

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

Biden Urges Americans to Reject 'Big Lie' of Stolen 2020 Election, Defend 'Sacred Right to Vote'

by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)

US President Joe Biden said Tuesday that defending voting rights in the United States was a "national imperative," calling the slew of Republican state legislation this year restricting access to voting "the most significant test of our democracy since the Civil War."

"There's an unfolding assault taking place in America today ... an assault on democracy, an assault on liberty, an assault on who we are, who we are as Americans," Biden said, speaking from the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

The choice of venue was itself significant: the Declaration of Independence and US Constitution were both signed in the eastern port city, just blocks from the hall where Biden made his remarks.

"Bullies and merchants of fear, peddlers of lies, are threatening the very foundation of our country ... They want to make it so hard ... that they hope people don't vote at all. That's what this is about," he said, noting that 17 states this year have enacted 28 new laws making it harder for Americans to vote.

The Democratic leader drew extensive comparisons between the slew of laws [and court rulings](#) restricting access to voting and control over voting processes to the nation's long history of civil rights fights focused on voting rights, including the movements for Black suffrage and women's suffrage.

"The 21st Century Jim Crow assault is real, it's unrelenting, and we are going to challenge it vigorously," Biden said.

He urged passage of the For the People Act, a sweeping bill that would reverse many of the state-level voting rights changes as well as combat gerrymandering of districts and change campaign finance laws, but which was [successfully filibustered](#) by Republicans in the US Senate last month. However, he also said he would be doubling the size of the voting rights section of the US Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division and the number of enforcement staff.

However, Biden has so far resisted calls to end the filibuster, which he has the power to do, despite it blocking much of the legislation central to his agenda, including the Protect the Right

to Organize (PRO) Act, the American Families Plan, the American Jobs Plan, and the Equality Act.

'Have You No Shame'?

Biden also assailed the enduring view among Republicans that the November 2020 election was stolen and that then-President Donald Trump was the true victor, and the corresponding defense of the insurrection at the US Capitol on [January 6, 2021](#), when Trump supporters attempted to block certification of the Electoral College's voting results.

"The Confederates back then never breached the Capitol as insurrectionists did on January 6," Biden said, referring to the pro-slavery faction that ruled 11 southern states and attempted to secede from the United States in 1861 in order to preserve the enslavement of Black Americans. The four-year-long civil war that followed killed as many as [850,000 people](#) and remains the bloodiest conflict for Americans in US history, although it resulted in the freeing of four million enslaved Black Americans and the abolition of slavery outside of prisons.

According to a [Quinnipiac poll](#) conducted in late May, two-thirds of Republicans believe Biden's November 2020 election victory wasn't legitimate, although 64% of Americans overall believe that it was. The poll also found that two-thirds of Republicans would like to see Trump, who has only served one out of a possible two terms in office, run for president again in 2024. Those numbers [are up substantially](#) from the period immediately after the attempted putsch in which five people were killed, when it was just 42% of Republicans.

Biden attempted to cross the aisle and win over some of that support to his voting rights push by appealing to Americans' "sacred right to vote," while noting the concern world leaders voiced to him about the future of American democracy after the Capitol was stormed.

"We'll be asking my Republican friends in Congress and states and cities and counties to stand up for God's sake," Biden said. "And help prevent this concerted effort to undermine our election and the sacred right to vote. Have you no shame?"

Many, if not all, of the voting restrictions introduced by Republicans in the weeks and months after the November 2020 election were motivated by claims made by Trump that widespread fraud had allowed Democrats to manipulate the results of the vote, including by changing the way people voted and by producing fake mail-in ballots.

"Audits, recounts were conducted in Arizona, Wisconsin, in Georgia it was recounted three times. It's clear, for those who question the results and challenge the integrity of the election: no other election has ever been held under such scrutiny and such high standards. The Big Lie is just that: a big lie," Biden said to applause.

Trump has continued to push his claims at political events, including the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) summer gathering in Dallas, Texas, over the weekend, where he raged that "we were doing so well until the rigged election happened to come along. We were doing really well."

"Unfortunately, this was an election where the person that counts the votes was far more important than the candidate, no matter how many votes that candidate got - and we got record numbers of votes," [Trump said](#).

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

## Germany Becomes Latest NATO Ally to Establish Military Space Command by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)

During the Cold War, the US tested a slew of anti-satellite weapons, including detonating a nuclear weapon in space, which damaged a Soviet satellite. However, only recently has Washington worried that space was becoming militarized - now that other nations are developing similar capabilities.

On Tuesday, Germany became the latest NATO power to inaugurate a separate space command, following the United States' delimitation of space as a warfighting domain in need of a separate branch of the armed forces dedicated to preserving US supremacy in it.

In a speech at the German Space Situational Awareness Centre in Uedem, Defense Minister Annegret [Kramp-Karrenbauer said](#) "space has become a critical infrastructure that we need to secure."

In a separate statement, the defense ministry said it was "responding to the increasing significance of space for our state's ability to function, the prosperity of our population, and the increasing dependency of the armed forces on space-supported data, services and products." Germany has just six satellites in orbit; by comparison, the US has by far the world's largest number of satellites at 1,897, according to a January 2021 count.

Kramp-Karrenbauer said the new command's main job will be protecting satellites from both enemy threats and more innocent dangers, such as [space debris](#). According to the European Space Agency, Uedem is already tracking roughly 30,000 pieces of orbital debris with a diameter of 4 inches or greater, which could seriously damage or destroy a satellite if it were to impact it.

That's a big spike from just a few years ago, and it's driven in large part by the huge increase in satellites being put into orbit, which has necessarily led to an increase in dead satellites, too. According to data [obtained by Reuters](#), there are roughly 5,000 active and 3,400 dead satellites orbiting the Earth - a number that's doubled in the last two years, thanks to close-in satellite constellations like [Starlink, a high-speed](#) internet service by private space firm SpaceX. The occasion makes Germany the fourth NATO power in the last two years to establish a space command.

The US led the charge when it re-established US Space Command after a 17-year hiatus, during which its duties were folded into multiple other commands as the Pentagon focused on the US War on Terror. 2019 is also when then-US President Donald Trump ordered creation of the US Space Force (USSF) as a sixth branch of the armed forces dedicated to what the new [service called "spacepower,"](#) or the defense of the ultimate "high ground."

French President Emmanuel Macron created a space command in 2019 as well, renaming the air force to the French [Air and Space Force](#) in 2020. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson unveiled the [UK's new Space Command](#) in late 2020 as part of the largest defense expansion the country has seen in decades.

In all cases, the heads of state pointed to the increasing space capabilities of Russia, China, and India, claiming the development of [anti-satellite \(ASAT\) missiles](#) and directed-energy weapons had imperiled US satellites like never before. In fact, the US [has long possessed](#) such ASAT weapons, but between GPS navigation, guided munitions, communications, and

cloud-based information exchange by US and partner forces, satellites have become indispensable to how they wage war.

Russia, China and India have all denied they have any intent to militarize space as the US claims, saying it's the US who is [creating an arms](#) race in space.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

Texas Governor, House Republicans Vow to Arrest 57 State Reps Who Fled to DC Over Voting Reform Bill

by [Evan Craighead](#)

Dozens of members of the Texas House of Representatives traveled to Washington, DC, on Monday in an effort to break quorum in their chamber. The lawmakers issued a joint statement declaring they were specifically protesting GOP-backed voting reform legislation that seeks, in part, to enhance mail-in voting restrictions and ban drive-thru voting.

With 57 Democratic lawmakers missing, the Texas House of Representatives quickly established that it lacked the two-thirds quorum needed to vote on a number of bills backed by GOP lawmakers, including the voting reform bill dubbed 'House Bill 3.'

Soon after, Republican Texas Rep. Will Metcalf, chairman of the Texas House Administration Committee, issued a "call of the House," which passed with a 76-4 vote. The four votes opposed came from the remaining Democrats in the Texas House.

Metcalf then called for a vote to track down and potentially arrest the 57 lawmakers who traveled to DC on Monday.

"Members, the sergeant-at-arms and the officers appointed by him are directed to send for all absentees whose attendance is not excused for the purpose of securing and maintaining their attendance — under warrant of arrest, if necessary," he said.

The matter passed with another 76-4 vote.

The Texas House's vote came hours after Texas Governor Greg Abbott (R) said that the lawmakers who traveled to the nation's capital "on this taxpayer-paid junket" need to be "prepared to do it for well over year."

"As soon as they come back in the state of Texas, they will be arrested, they will be cabined inside the Texas Capitol until they get their job done," he warned in a live Monday interview [with local outlet KVUE](#). "Everybody who has a job must show up to do that job, just like your viewers on watching right now. State representatives have that same responsibility."

Despite threats from Texas Republicans, including the state's governor, it remains to be seen what can be done to individuals outside of their jurisdiction.

Democratic Texas Rep. Jasmine Crockett asserted to CNN on Tuesday that she and her colleagues would only be detained, at most.

"I know the law, and the governor knows the law as well ... I'm a criminal defense attorney and so I understand that I've not committed a crime, so I can't get arrested. The most that could happen is I could be detained," she said. "And it's not the governor that gets to make that decision, it's the Speaker of the House."

"I'm not worried about the threat of being arrested," Crockett emphasized.

Democratic Texas Rep. James Talarico issued his own social media "statement," taunting Abbott's pledge to have the lawmakers arrested.

The Democratic Texas lawmakers have pledged to remain outside of Texas until August 6, the end of the current special legislative session. It is possible that Abbott will convene another special session.

In a Monday statement, the lawmakers acknowledged they were "living on borrowed time in Texas" and need Congress to pass the ['For the People Act'](#), which calls for the nationwide implementation of same-day, automatic voter registration. [It also seeks to conditionally restore](#) the voting rights of felons and to limit gerrymandering.

"Today, Texas House Democrats stand united in our decision to break quorum and refuse to let the Republican-led legislature force through dangerous legislation that would trample on Texans' freedom to vote," the lawmakers' joint statement read.

US President Joe Biden delivered a speech on Tuesday in support of the 'For the People Act' and similar state legislation that seeks to expand voters' access to the ballot box.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

Taliban Reportedly Kills 22 Afghan Special Forces Troops Attempting to Surrender  
by [Evan Craighead](#)

According to the Afghanistan government's Refugee and Reparations Ministry, Taliban forces have made substantial regional advancements, particularly in the country's northern sector, within the past 15 days that have displaced more than 5,600 families from their homes.

At least 22 commandos of an Afghan Special Forces unit were executed in Faryab Province's town of Dawlat Abad on June 16, [CNN reported on Tuesday](#), citing confirmation of the deaths by the Red Cross.

While the incident occurred nearly a month ago, [graphic video footage of the alleged execution](#) has only been recently made public.

Commandos said to be from the Afghan Special Forces unit are seen being led out of a building in one video. Soon after, the "Allahu Akhbar" [is overheard](#) as gunshots ring out at the open-air marketplace.

According to the outlet, the commandos ran out of ammunition as they were attempting to defend the town from Taliban forces.

Members of the Taliban argued to CNN that the obtained footage was misrepresented in an effort to encourage Afghan forces to not surrender. The group's spokesperson asserted that they were still holding at least 24 Afghan commandos.

However, the Afghan Ministry of Defense, which [has confirmed the 22 reported deaths](#), has denied the Taliban's detention of two dozen commandos in the Faryab Province.

Per US President Joe Biden, US troops will officially finish withdrawing from their mission in Afghanistan by August 31.

Despite the [recent gains made by the Taliban](#) in Afghanistan, the US has [remained steadfast in its efforts to remove troops](#) from the country and, as of Monday, Army Gen. Austin "Scott" Miller has relinquished his post as the top US commander in charge of NATO's Resolute Support Mission and United States Forces - Afghanistan.

US Central Command chief Gen. Frank McKenzie, who took over Miller's post, has emphasized that the transition of power "marks an important milestone in the transition of our involvement in Afghanistan, but it's not the end of the story."

"You can count on our support in the dangerous and difficult days ahead. We will be with you," McKenzie said during a ceremony in Kabul on Monday, [as reported by The Hill](#).

That same day, Pentagon secretary John Kirby challenged the idea that the Taliban is being provided an "inevitable victory," but stopped short of saying how the US will assist Afghan forces in the future.

"What we're trying to do is protect our options going forward to make sure that the rest of this drawdown can be safe and orderly, and so we are being — I'll just say it — we're being fairly miserly about the kind of operational information we're putting out there," Kirby said, noting that this is a "delicate time" for the region.

Nevertheless, the US' pullout has prompted [Kabul to call on external partners](#), such as the [militaries of Russia](#), [India](#) and China, to assist with technical, anti-terrorism operations in the region.

While Afghan authorities recognize the Taliban's right to exist as a legitimate political force, the government has expressed that it will not stand for the group becoming a "monopoly" alongside others.

Presently, the Taliban controls at least 212 districts in Afghanistan, while the Afghan government controls 70 districts, according to a tracker by the [Foundation for Defense of Democracies' Long War Journal](#). Some 116 districts remain contested.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

Texas Senate Passes GOP Voting Reform Bill as Democratic Lawmakers Remain in DC  
by [Evan Craighead](#)

Earlier Tuesday, US President Joe Biden declared that the US is facing "the most significant test of our democracy since the Civil War" as GOP state lawmakers continue to put forward legislation to restrict the average voter's access to the ballot box. Biden's comments came alongside a tense battle over Texas' voting reform bill.

With a 18-4, party-line vote on Tuesday, Republican lawmakers in the Texas Senate passed Senate Bill 1, despite only having 22 of its 31 members present. The remaining nine members traveled to Washington, DC, [with their counterparts in the Texas House of Representatives](#).

Unlike the Texas House, the Senate was able to maintain quorum and vote on the proposed legislation authored by Republican Texas Sen. Bryan Hughes.

Hughes rejected pushback against his "common-sense reforms" on Tuesday.

"This bill is about making it both easy to vote and harder to cheat," he said, arguing that the bill had been misconstrued amid the "horrible, misleading, false national debate coming out of Washington."

However, according to Democrats in the Texas Senate, SB1 will roll back a number of measures implemented that made it easier for underrepresented communities to have their voices heard. The bill, in part, calls for enhanced access for partisan poll watchers, a ban on 24-hour voting locations and additional identification requirements for absentee voting.

"Rather than continuing to fruitlessly debate Republicans who refuse to legislate in good faith, Texas Senate Democrats decided to take matters into their own hands in order to secure the voting rights of Texans — especially voters of colors, seniors and those with disabilities — and work with our partners at the federal level to pass voting rights legislation that would rein in discriminatory voter suppression laws and unfair redistricting practices," wrote the Democratic senators who fled the state to push for federal voting reform legislation.

Though the bill has been passed in the Texas Senate, it will remain in limbo until the Texas House reaches quorum.

Amid the lawmakers' trip to the US capital, Biden delivered a speech in which he [panned the GOP state lawmakers' reform bills](#) as the "21st Century Jim Crow assault." He asserted that Republicans are attempting to bully voters and capitalize off unfounded fears of US election security via new legislation in some 17 states.

During a Tuesday meeting with Democratic lawmakers from Texas, US Vice President Kamala Harris reassured the legislators that "defending the right to vote is as American as apple pie." "I know what you have done comes with great sacrifice, both personal and political," Harris told the lawmakers. "You are doing this in support and defense of some of our nation's highest ideals."

At the same time, Texas Governor Greg Abbott and members of the Texas House of Representatives have expressed intent to hold their fellow lawmakers responsible for ditching their duties earlier this week.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

Ever Given Officially Leaves Egyptian Waters as Owners Anticipate 'Thousands' of Lawsuits by [Gaby Arancibia](#)

The Ever Given container ship stole headlines in early March after blocking Egypt's Suez Canal for nearly a week, a move that severely disrupted global trade. Although the Panamanian-flagged vessel was eventually freed from the single-lane stretch of the canal, its troubles were far from over as affected parties sought compensation for the setback.

The troubled Ever Given officially departed Egyptian waters early Tuesday after the vessel underwent an inspection by officials at the Suez Canal, marking the end to the ship's monthslong stay in the area.

Citing a canal source familiar with the development, Reuters [reported](#) that the Ever Given officially departed Egyptian waters at roughly 4 a.m. local time after its inspection at Port Said.

[Latest tracking](#) by Marine Traffic notes the vessel is presently traversing the waters of the Mediterranean Sea, specifically those near the Greek island of Crete, at a pace of 10 knots. The vessel is currently en route to the Port of Rotterdam in the Netherlands.

The Ever Given was initially cleared to depart the canal's Great Bitter Lake on July 7 after the ship's owner, Shoen Kisen Kaisha Ltd., managed to reach a financial settlement with canal authorities. Both parties had previously been involved in weeks' worth of back-and-forth negotiations.

At the time, Lt. Gen. Ossama Rabei, who serves as the head of the Suez Canal, commented that the settlement "achieved justice and prioritized both parties' interests." He further underscored that the agreement "ended a crisis that lasted for more than three months."

While the details of the settlement have not been publicly disclosed, it's worth noting that the Suez Canal Authority had initially sought \$915 million in compensation before the sum was lowered down to \$550 million. Local reports have suggested that the agreement includes the addition of a new tugboat for the canal.

It's expected that the received funds will be geared toward the costs associated with the stalled canal traffic, lost transit fees and overall charges tied to the salvage operation.

Financial Hardships Far From Over

While the owners of the Ever Given were able to come to terms with the Suez Canal Authority, it's unlikely to be smooth sailing from here on out, especially amid growing concerns that a bevy of lawsuits are incoming from businesses that were hurt by the unintended March blockade.

In anticipation of "many hundreds or thousands" of legal claims that could be filed against the vessel's owner, two subsidiaries of Shoen Kisen Kaisha Ltd and the Evergreen Group, were granted a temporary stay on any potential claims that may emerge in the next two months.

Bloomberg [reported](#) that the court's approval will allow for overlapping claims to be grouped together, a move that could help lessen legal costs. However, as the current situation is still fluid, officials are expected to reconvene in a UK court in two months' time to address emerging claims filed against the companies.

The London court's Tuesday decision followed a [previous ruling](#) that limited claims against the container vessel to about \$116 million.

As a multitude of officials brainstormed how best to free the Ever Given, the canal blockage forced many ships to either sit idly, whereas others opted to take a much longer alternative route around the Cape of Good Hope. However, the alternative option came at a higher cost, with companies having to dish out additional funds to cover new expenses, such as increased fuel.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

Lifesaver Trump - Cartoon

The Trump administration saw a whopping three justices appointed to the US Supreme Court, a feat that prompted many Americans to become increasingly concerned about the balance of the federal bench. However, despite the 6-3 conservative majority, the high court has surprisingly sided with the liberal bloc on some issues.

Former US President Donald Trump has reportedly grown increasingly “disappointed” by the work of the once-troubled Justice Brett Kavanaugh, a new book by journalist Michael Wolff has revealed.

Excerpts of Wolff’s “Landslide” book that were provided to [Axios](#) detail that while the former president is feeling particularly betrayed by [all three justices](#) he appointed to the US Supreme Court, he is mostly bothered by the lack of “courage” shown by Kavanaugh.

"There were so many others I could have appointed, and everyone wanted me to," Trump reportedly told Wolff. "Where would he be without me? I saved his life. He wouldn't even be in a law firm. Who would have had him? Nobody. Totally disgraced. Only I saved him."

The newly surfaced remarks from Trump offer a stark distinction from the former commander-in-chief’s initial praise for Kavanaugh, especially of the commentary [publicly voiced](#) when the SCOTUS nominee was accused of [sexual assault](#).

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

Conor McGregor Slapped With Six-Month Medical Suspension After Breaking His Leg During Match

by [Gaby Arancibia](#)

The champion UFC fighter declared over the weekend in a social media post that he was on the recovery path after having undergone surgery for nearly four hours in order to realign a broken tibia.

Famed UFC fighter Conor McGregor has been handed a six-month medical suspension after the Irish mixed martial artist broke his leg during a recent match in Las Vegas, Nevada, newly surfaced reports have detailed.

A list of medical suspensions released by MixedMartialArts.com on Tuesday [detailed](#) that McGregor will be barred from the octagon - at most - until January 7, 2022, unless he manages to obtain clearance from an orthopedic physician for his fractured leg. At minimum, his suspension could run until August 25.

McGregor is also not permitted to participate in any contact training until August 10.

The announcement came as the fighter [recently noted](#) on social media that his surgery “went excellent,” and that he will be spending the next six weeks on crutches, which would place him a few days shy of the minimum suspension.

Medical suspensions are quite typical in the sport, having been enforced to ensure that athletes are provided with an allotted time in which they solely focus on their wellbeing after having been injured.

McGregor’s temporary setback unfolded on July 10 during UFC 264 at Nevada’s T-Mobile Arena. Shockingly, despite having broken the tibia on his left leg, McGregor managed to briefly hold an [on-scene interview](#) with UFC President Dana White before being whisked away on a stretcher.

The Tuesday announcement will mark the second long-term suspension handed down to McGregor during the 2021 season. The Irishman [previously received](#) a medical suspension in January, after a fight against fellow fighter Dustin Poirier left him bloodied inside the octagon. Incidentally, the July 10 match was also against Poirier, who was not listed as having suffered any injuries on the medical suspension list.

Aside from McGregor, fighters Greg Hardy, Yana Kunitskaya, Sean O'Malley, Ryan Hall and Omari Akhmedoc also all face a six-month suspension.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

'Clearly a Joke': US Judge Dismisses Roy Moore's \$95 Million Lawsuit Against Sacha Baron Cohen

by [Gaby Arancibia](#)

In 2018, actor-comedian Sacha Baron Cohen staged a variety of eyebrow-raising interviews with various political officials for his satire Showtime series, "Who Is America?" Well-known guests included former US Vice President Dick Cheney, Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT) and former Alaskan Gov. Sarah Palin, among other figures.

A US judge has dismissed a multimillion-dollar defamation lawsuit filed against British comedian Sacha Baron Cohen by former Alabama Chief Justice Roy Moore, a 26-page ruling detailed on Tuesday.

US District Judge John Cronan determined that Moore waived his right to file a lawsuit against Baron Cohen when he signed an agreement with "unambiguous contractual language" that prevented the Alabama official from filing a suit.

Moore and his wife Kayla had filed the \$95 million lawsuit on the grounds of defamation and emotional distress after an interview involving the Alabama official was aired as part of the Showtime series in July 2018.

The [interview](#) saw Moore sit down alongside Baron Cohen, who was disguised as fictional Israeli anti-terrorism expert Erran Morad, for a demonstration of a device that allegedly had the power to detect pedophiles. As the segment went on, the detection device eventually sounded off the moment that Baron Cohen brought the instrument near Moore.

It's worth noting the segment was filmed months after Moore lost his 2017 special election bid for the state's open Senate seat, after he began to face [multiple accusations](#) that he sought out sexual relationships with teenagers when he was in his 30s. He has repeatedly denied the accusations.

At the time, Moore agreed to participate in the get-together under the pretense that he would be receiving an award for his support of the Israeli state. Recordings of the segment later showed Moore abruptly leaving the set and proclaiming, "I support Israel; I don't support this kind of stuff."

"Given the satirical nature of that segment and the context in which it was presented, no reasonable viewer would have interpreted Cohen's conduct during the interview as asserting

factual statements concerning Judge Moore,” Cronan declared in his ruling, underscoring First Amendment rights and the waiver prevented the lawsuit from going forward.

The segment was “clearly a joke,” the judge added.

The ruling - to no one’s surprise - was not met warmly by the Moore team, which quickly submitted an appeal.

Larry Klayman, a legal representative for the Moore family, [told](#) Reuters that Cronan’s conclusion made “no factual and legal sense,” and that the “dismissal is the joke and more than a bad joke at that.”

Baron Cohen, who has built much of his career on over-the-top satirical characters such as Ali G and Borat Sagdiyev, also stole headlines in 2018 when he had former US Vice President Dick Cheney [sign](#) a waterboard device for another segment on the comical Showtime series.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

Khalilzad to Meet Ghani in Uzbekistan as Senior US Officials Visit Country - White House

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) - US Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad will meet Afghan President Ashraf Ghani during a US delegation visit to Uzbekistan, the National Security Council spokeswoman Emily Horne said on Wednesday.

“U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad will join the [US-led] delegation for diplomatic engagements with President Ashraf Ghani of Afghanistan and with leaders from the C-5 and other regional countries to discuss how to promote peace, security, and development in Afghanistan, and advance shared regional security interests, including counterterrorism cooperation,” the statement said.

The delegation, which will pay the visit to Uzbekistan this week, will be headed by the Assistant to the President for Homeland Security, Dr. Elizabeth Sherwood-Randall.

“[Sherwood-Randall] will lead a U.S. delegation to a high-level international conference promoting prosperity, security, and regional connectivity between Central and South Asia in Tashkent, Uzbekistan,” the statement added.

Sherwood-Randall is expected to meet with leaders from across the region.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

US Inflation Likely to Remain Elevated in Coming Months Before Moderating - Fed's Powell

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) - US inflation will likely remain elevated in the near term before moderating in the coming months, Federal Chairman Jerome Powell said in prepared remarks to Congress on Wednesday.

“Inflation has increased notably and will likely remain elevated in coming months before moderating. Inflation is being temporarily boosted by base effects, as the sharp

pandemic-related price declines from last spring drop out of the 12-month calculation,” Powell said in prepared testimony on monetary policy. “In addition, strong demand in sectors where production bottlenecks or other supply constraints have limited production has led to especially rapid price increases for some goods and services, which should partially reverse as the effects of the bottlenecks unwind.”

The Fed chief added that prices for services that were hard hit by the pandemic have also jumped in recent months as demand for these services has surged with the reopening of the economy.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

**Texas Republicans Authorize Police to Arrest Democrat Lawmakers Upon Return**

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) - Texas House Republicans have approved a measure to allow state police officers to arrest Democrat lawmakers who abandoned their posts and left Austin to delay voting on a pending voting rights legislation.

More than 50 Democrats from the Texas legislature fled to Washington, DC on Monday night as part of their second attempt this summer to deny Republicans a quorum to pass their voting rights legislation.

Texas law allows for arresting lawmakers who abandon their posts as dereliction of duty.

The Texas House approved the measure with a 76-4 vote on Tuesday.

Texas Republican lawmakers have proposed legislation to ensure the integrity of election in the state, including by limiting early voting hours, banning drive-through voting, restricting voting by mail, banning public officials from sending unsolicited absentee ballot applications and providing poll watchers more access where election activity is happening, among other things.

Texas Governor Greg Abbott called for a special legislative session to commence on July 8 after Democrats blocked Republicans from passing their voting rights legislation with a walkout during the previous legislative session.

The current special session can last no longer than 30 days. The Democrat lawmakers who left for Washington, DC said their plan is to stay in the capital until the special session is over.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

**Russian, US Hierarchs Discuss Boosting Ties Between 2 Churches- Orthodox Church in America**

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) - The hierarchs of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) and the Orthodox Church in America (OCA) met in New York to discuss areas of mutual interest and strengthen the relationship between the two churches, an OCA spokesperson told Sputnik.

"The private meeting between Metropolitan Tikhon [First Hierarch of the OCA] and Metropolitan [of Volokolamsk] Hilarion following the Divine Liturgy on July 11, 2021 was an opportunity for the hierarchs to meet in person again after a long hiatus due to the pandemic," the spokesman said. "The two hierarchs assured one another of brotherly prayers and support aimed at strengthening even more the relationship between the two sister churches."

The two metropolitans discussed different topics of mutual interest, including the effects of the coronavirus pandemic, upcoming celebrations and anniversaries as well as various aspects of life of the church in Russia and the United States, the spokesman said.

During the Divine Liturgy, Metropolitan Hilarion noted that the pandemic prevented many celebrations, including the 50th anniversary of the autocephaly granted to the Orthodox Church in America, the spokesperson said.

The Russian Orthodox Church granted a tomos of autocephaly, or decree of independence, to the OCA in April 1970 following decades of unsuccessful attempts of reconciliation after the Bolshevik revolution in 1917.

The OCA has its origins in a mission established by Russian monks in Alaska and currently consists of more than 700 parishes, monasteries and communities in the United States, Canada and Mexico.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

Blinken, OAS Chief Discuss Cooperation to Restore Security in Haiti - US State Dept.

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Organization of American States (OAS) Secretary General Luis Almagro recently discussed working together to ensure that security is restored in Haiti following Haitian President Jovenel Moise's assassination, State Department spokesperson Ned Price said in a press release.

"Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken spoke today with Secretary General of the Organization of American States (OAS) Luis Almagro to discuss the situation in Haiti following the assassination of President Jovenel Moise," Price said in the release on Tuesday. "The Secretary underscored the United States' commitment to working with the OAS and our international partners to help Haitian institutions restore security and to pave the way for free and fair legislative and presidential elections in 2021."

Blinken and Almagro both expressed concern over the political and security situation in Haiti, Price said.

Haiti, one of the poorest countries in the world, has been experiencing social, political and constitutional crises, with protesters blaming Moise for targeted killings, widespread corruption and an economic collapse.

The opposition has said it believes Moise's five-year-term should have ended in February 2021, five years after his predecessor Michel Martelly stepped down, but Moise insisted he had an additional year to serve, a position backed by the OAS.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

**Canada's Trudeau, Israel's Lapid Discuss 'Strengthening Cooperation' Between Countries**

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) - Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Israeli Alternate Prime Minister Yair Lapid are committed to strengthening the relationship between Ottawa and Jerusalem, the Canadian Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said.

"The two leaders discussed their common commitment to democracy and to strengthening cooperation between their countries," the PMO said in a readout of the conversation on Tuesday.

Trudeau highlighted his belief in the right of Israelis and Palestinians to live "with dignity, without fear, and with their human rights respected." The Canadian prime minister added that Ottawa continues to promote peace in the Middle East through a two-state solution.

Trudeau expressed opposition to unilateral actions that would jeopardize the peace process. Last month, a new cabinet was formed in Israel, putting an end to the 12-year tenure of Benjamin Netanyahu as prime minister. Naftali Bennett became the new prime minister and Lapid took up the post of foreign minister. Under the coalition agreement, Lapid is set to supersede Bennett in two years.

The government shuffle was preceded by clashes between Israel and the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip in recent years. In Israel, 12 people were killed and more than 50 were seriously wounded during the clashes. The death toll among Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, Jerusalem and the West Bank exceeded 270.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

**Canadians Should Put Aside Pride in Recognizing 'Horrific' Past for Reconciliation - Chief**

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) - Canadians should set aside their pride in discussing the country's appalling treatment of indigenous peoples, including the issue of genocide, in order to make progress on reconciliation, Cowessess First Nation Chief Cadmus Delorme told Sputnik. Last month, Cowessess First Nation became the second indigenous community to uncover an unmarked gravesite on a former residential school territory, where indigenous children were forcibly sent to be stripped of their heritage and assimilated into European Canadian society. A ground-penetrating radar scan of the former Marieval Indian Residential School revealed the presence of 751 unmarked graves, presumably most of them with remains of children.

The question of whether the schools activities constitute genocide has been the source of a fervent debate. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission concluded in its report that the residential schools represented cultural genocide, a form of genocide under the United Nations Convention on Genocide.

Delorme, whose parents attended the controversial schools, said he believes the schools are genocidal and Canadians should set aside their pride in discussing this aspect of the nation's history.

"The residential schools had one goal: to brainwash myself and my lineage... that is genocide. So, I would state that that is a part of truth. It doesn't mean the genocide will continue in the future, but we all must put down a little bit of our pride and realize that there were some very horrific wrongs that were done," Delorme told Sputnik.

Delorme said that all of Canada's inhabitants must "reset [their] compass" in order to coexist for the next hundred years and beyond.

#### CANADA MUST ACT QUICKLY

Most Canadians say they agree that the government needs to act and do so quickly, decisively, but in accordance with the wishes of the country's first peoples.

Poll after poll shows that the vast majority of Canadians believe the state must take immediate steps to improve the life of indigenous peoples and provide assistance in the detection and identification efforts embarked on by First Nations communities.

Delorme underscores this belief, saying that, while he is grateful for the attention indigenous issues have received and the reflection that is occurring, eventually, the public's attention may turn towards other issues, and decisionmakers - politicians - will move on as well.

"We don't want them to shelve our great plans. So, that's why it's so important that we get this right now and that we invest in it right away so we can focus on the bigger things, our great economy, great social impact that this country can have both with First Nations and non-[indigenous people]," Delorme said.

To this end, Delorme reiterated his hope that all Canadian citizens continue to help indigenous people by holding elected officials to account.

The Chief also emphasized that, contrary to Canada's historically paternalistic treatment of the country's first peoples, the process must be indigenous-led, saying the state's role is to "invest in this [endeavor] and to stand beside us."

#### RECONCILIATION - AN OPPORTUNITY FOR CANADA

Despite a general consensus regarding the next steps, Canadians are split on the country's progress on reconciliation.

While according to a recent Ipsos poll, 54 percent of Canadians said Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has lived up to his promise of improving the relationship between indigenous and non-indigenous people, a greater number of respondents - 68 percent - said reconciliation, which is defined as the establishment and maintenance of a "mutually respectful relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in this country," will not be achieved in their lifetime.

Chief Delorme said he believes that Canada is doing an "alright" job and can potentially set an example for the rest of the world.

"I do believe and I'm optimistic that Canada can tell the story to the world that it did wrong to its first people of this pre-country and that with truth and reconciliation we have now persevered to coexist as how it should have been at the beginning," Delorme said. "Maybe Canada can show other countries how to get it right."

However, Delorme said he, among others, is skeptical about the timeframe for reconciliation.

Delorme said if reconciliation occurs in the next decade, he would be "excited," but ultimately recognizes the process will likely take a generation and frets he may end up another "upset elder" if the path to reconciliation extends beyond that.

Ultimately, Delorme said reconciliation is about the future that the children, including his own, will inherit.

"Reconciliation is where my daughter, if she wants to be a nurse, if she wants to be a bus driver, if she wants to be a chief [she can do that]. But she also wants to make sure that she is treated equal in this country and proud to be a first people - that is reconciliation. That you can coexist and not have to give up one to try gain the other, and that is a psychological adjustment that this country needs to do," Delorme said.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

**Iran Intelligence Officials Indicted on Kidnapping Conspiracy Charges - US Justice Dept.**

WASHINGTON, July 14 (Sputnik) - A US federal court has charged four Iranian intelligence officials for allegedly participating in a kidnapping conspiracy, violating sanctions, as well as bank and wire fraud, the Justice Department said in a press release.

"A New York federal court unsealed an indictment today charging four Iranian nationals with conspiracies related to kidnapping, sanctions violations, bank and wire fraud, and money laundering. A co-conspirator and California resident, also of Iran, faces additional structuring charges," the release said on Tuesday.

The release said Alireza Shavaroghi Farahani, 50; Mahmoud Khazein, 42; Kiya Sadeghi, 35; and Omid Noori, 45, all of Iran, conspired to kidnap a New York City journalist of Iranian origin who criticized the Iranian government. Farahani is an Iranian intelligence official and the three other men are Iranian intelligence assets, the release said.

In addition, the release said Iranian national Niloufar Bahadorifar, 46, who is currently residing in California, allegedly provided financial services that supported the kidnapping plot that began as early as June 2020.

The four Iranian intelligence officials face up to life in prison while Bahadorifar faces up to 80 years in prison, the release said.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

**Canada's Top Soldier Urges Veterans to Honor Afghan Legacy, Not Mire in 'Bitterness'**

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) - Canadian Armed Forces commander Lt.-Gen. Wayne Eyre is urging Afghan war veterans to honor the legacy of the military mission and fallen comrades instead of miring in bitterness and remorse as the Taliban (banned in Russia) appears poised to retake control of Afghanistan.

"Should we hang our heads in bitterness and remorse; or should we continue to venerate the sacrifices of so many in our ranks and their families, to honor the noble commitment to service and making the world a better place, and endeavor to learn from our experience, grow and become better every day? While none of us can speak for them, I have to believe our Fallen would want us to pursue to latter," Eyre said in a letter on Tuesday.

Eyre's letter comes days after the Taliban took control over the Panjwai district in Kandahar province, where the majority of the Canadian military's 158 casualties occurred.

Canada's top soldier acknowledged the current projections, which say the Taliban is on track to reclaim control over Afghanistan after foreign troops complete their withdrawal, saying such a prospect leaves active military personnel and veterans with "much pain and doubt."

Eyre said he recognized that it is difficult to envision Canadian troops being able to observe the fruits of their labor in the succeeding years, as those who served in Europe and Korea did.

Eyre did reassure current service members and veterans that they did everything asked of them by the government. Canada's acting Chief of Defense staff also pointed out that Canadian soldiers succeeded in giving the Afghan government time to make decisions regarding the long-term future of the country, however, Kabul's decisions were "theirs to make."

The commander urged current and former service members to seek mental support, if needed, including links to the different support resources available.

The United States along with allies, including Canada, invaded Afghanistan ostensibly to destroy the al Qaeda terror group (banned in Russia), which planned the 2001 attacks on New York and Washington from Afghan soil. But the effort morphed into an extended attempt to establish a democracy.

During the intervening years, the Taliban regrouped and gained control of much of the nation in what has become America's longest war. The Canadian military, which was primarily active in Kandahar, exited the campaign in 2014.

The Taliban has been gaining ground in Afghanistan and now controls 85 percent of the country. Pierre Henrot, security consultant and former UN observer, told Sputnik last week that the Afghan government is unlikely to be able to retain control the country after the US departure. The US troop withdrawal from Afghanistan is more than 95 percent complete, US Central Command said on Tuesday.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

US Army Orders More Paladin 155mm Self-Propelled Heavy Artillery Howitzers - Pentagon WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) - The US Army has ordered more M109A7 Paladin self-propelled artillery howitzers and M992A3 ammunition carrier vehicles from BAE Systems in Pennsylvania, the Defense Department announced.

"BAE Systems [in] York, Pennsylvania was awarded a \$72,458,148 modification ... contract for the production and delivery of M109A7 and M992A3 vehicles," the Defense Department said in a press release on Tuesday.

Work on the contract will be performed in York, Pennsylvania over the next three and a half years with an estimated completion date of December 31, 2024, the release said.

The M109 Paladin is a 155 mm turreted self-propelled heavy artillery howitzer that was first introduced in the early 1960s. The weapon has been upgraded a number of times since then, most recently to the M109A7.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

US Treating Ransomware as National Security, Law Enforcement Issue - Blinken

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) - The United States is treating ransomware attacks as both a national security and a law enforcement issue amid a rise in the number of such attacks against the US government and businesses, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said.

"We're also treating ransomware not only as a law enforcement issue, but also as a national security issue. Ransomware and other cybercrimes affect all of us – our businesses, local governments, our most critical infrastructure from power grids to hospitals," Blinken said on Tuesday.

Blinken made the comment in a speech at the National Security Commission on Artificial Intelligence's Global Emerging Technology Summit.

Earlier on Tuesday, the Biden administration said that they will be announcing new actions to combat ransomware attacks and bolster the US's cyber resilience later this week.

The frequency of ransomware attacks over the last several months against US-based entities has increased over the last several months and include Colonial Pipeline, Republican National Committee and the automation software provider Kaseya.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

Iran Intelligence Officials Indicted on Kidnapping Conspiracy Charges - US Justice Dept.

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) - A US federal court has charged four Iranian intelligence officials for allegedly participating in a kidnapping conspiracy, violating sanctions, as well as bank and wire fraud, the US Justice Department said in a press release.

"A New York federal court unsealed an indictment today charging four Iranian nationals with conspiracies related to kidnapping, sanctions violations, bank and wire fraud, and money laundering. A co-conspirator and California resident, also of Iran, faces additional structuring charges," the release said on Tuesday.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

US Trade Representative, UK Counterpart Agreed to Combat Forced Labor - Statement

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) - US Trade Representative Katherine Tai and her UK counterpart Elizabeth Truss agreed to promote fair global competition, address forced labor practices and enhance economic ties between their countries, Tai's Press Office said. "United States Trade Representative Katherine Tai today met with United Kingdom Secretary of State for International Trade Elizabeth Truss... [They] agreed to work together both bilaterally and through multilateral fora to promote fair competition, enhance the international trade system, and address forced labor issues," the press office said in a statement on Tuesday. Tai and Truss praised the Large Civil Aircraft framework as a platform for collaboration on shared challenges, including "those posed by the anti-competitive practices of China and other non-market economies."

Last month, the United States and the United Kingdom agreed not to impose tariffs for the next five years on the large aircraft businesses between their countries and to instead challenge competitors.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

#### F-35 Simulator Still Not Working So Aircraft Can Not Even Be Tested Yet - GAO Report

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) - The Lockheed Martin F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, the most expensive aircraft in history, still cannot even be adequately tested for operational use because its simulator system remains inadequate and has not yet been upgraded, a Government Accountability Office (GAO) report said.

"[The] F-35 program has not completed operational testing on the aircraft to ensure warfighters get the capabilities they require, primarily due to increasing delays with the aircraft simulator," the report said on Tuesday.

In August 2020, the F-35 Program Office determined the simulator which is to be used to replicate complex test scenarios that could not be accomplished in real-world environment testing, did not fully represent the aircraft's capabilities and could not be used for further testing until fixed, the report said.

Also, although the F-35 program is now nearly 20 years old, the US Air Force and manufacturers still have to "resolve critical deficiencies with the aircraft; ensure critical manufacturing processes are mature; address supply chain issues that strain production and sustainment; and [and] take steps to ensure reliability and maintainability goals are met," the report said.

In the three years of Block 4 capability development, its total estimated cost increased from \$10.6 billion to \$14.4 billion. The Defense Department added another year to the Block 4 schedule, in March 2021 but the GAO found the remaining development time frame is not achievable, the report said.

"Unless the F-35 program accounts for historical performance in the schedule estimates, the Block 4 schedule will continue to exceed estimated time frames and stakeholders will lack reliable information on when the modernized capabilities will be delivered," the report added.

The F-35 program began development in 2001 and remains the most expensive weapon system program in Defense Department history, the report acknowledged. Currently, the program is more than 8 years delayed and \$165 billion over original cost expectations, according to the report.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

US to Invest \$1.5Bln to Adopt Artificial Intelligence Over Next 5 Years - Austin

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) - The United States will invest nearly \$1.5 billion into the adoption of the artificial intelligence (AI) technologies by the Joint Artificial Intelligence Center in the course of the next five years, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said.

"We have elevated the Joint Artificial Intelligence Center so that it reports directly to the Deputy Secretary [of Defense] ensuring that we have the focus from senior leaders needed to drive AI transformation. Over the next five years, the [US] Department [of Defense] will invest nearly one and a half billion dollars in the efforts to accelerate the Center's adoption of AI," Austin said on Tuesday.

Austin made the comments during a conference organized by the National Security Committee on Artificial Intelligence.

The Defense Secretary underscored that the need for AI is dictated by the pacing challenge posed by China which plans to use this type of high-tech innovations in its surveillance missions and autonomous weapons as early as in 2030.

The Defense Department presently has more than 600 AI efforts in progress, which is significantly more than just a year ago, Austin said.

Austin's assessment that the United States is falling behind in terms of AI is in line with the report issued by the National Security Commission on AI in March that concluded the United States is incapable of defending itself against threats related to AI technologies and the government is not taking efforts to win a technology competition in this area.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) -

CUBA DEVELOPMENTS

\* The United States is exploring different ways to aid the Cuban people amid protests in the country in ways that are consistent with American values and interests, State Department spokesperson Ned Price said on Tuesday.

\* US Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas warned on Tuesday Cubans as well as Haitians against fleeing to the United States amid unrest in their home countries as the entry will be denied even if they survive the perilous sea voyage.

#### PUTIN ON UKRAINE

- \* Putin said on Tuesday that the article he published a day earlier was addressed to the people of Russia and Ukraine, as well as to the sponsors of Ukraine's political leadership.
- \* Putin said commenting on his article that active work on the "anti-Russia" project has begun and this development could only cause concern.
- \* The Russian president said any country has the right to choose its own path, but this choice should not threaten security.
- \* Putin said he believes that the Ukraine authorities made absolutely illegal decisions and did not give opponents a chance for legal political work.

#### HAITI MOISE ASSASSINATION PROBE

- \* One suspect arrested in connection with the assassination of Haitian President Jovenel Moise was a "confidential source" of the US Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), a DEA spokesperson told Sputnik on Tuesday.
- \* The US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) sent three individuals to Haiti as part of an interagency delegation to assist the Moise assassination probe, DHS Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas said.
- \* The UN Security Council is not expected to take any immediate steps regarding Haiti's request for United Nations peacekeepers, a diplomatic source told RIA Novosti.

#### KERRY VISIT TO MOSCOW

- \* US Special Envoy John Kerry's mission in Russia is to test the possibility for both countries' cooperation on the climate change challenge, the State Department's spokesman Ned Price told reporters on Tuesday.

#### RUSSIA-BELARUS RELATIONS

- \* The talks between Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Belarusian counterpart Alexander Lukashenko, which lasted more than five hours, have ended, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told Sputnik on Tuesday.
- \* Putin and Lukashenko had a detailed discussion and worked out steps for cooperation in customs, taxes and energy areas, Peskov said.
- \* The Union State of Russia and Belarus is not literally a state, it is just a certain level of integration with full preservation of sovereignty, Putin said.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

NASA, Europe Space Agency Form Partnership to Monitor Climate Change

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) – NASA and the European Space Agency (ESA) agreed to combine Earth observation data from multiple satellites into a single open-source format available to scientists, policy makers and the public in an attempt to help mitigate the impact of climate change, according to a joint statement signed on Tuesday.

“Not only will NASA and ESA work together to deliver unparalleled Earth science observations, research, and applications, but all of our findings will also be free and open for the benefit of the entire world as we work together to combat and mitigate climate change,” NASA Associate Administrator for Science Thomas Zurbuchen said in a press release.

The partnership was formalized through a joint statement of intent, which outlines how the agencies will collaborate to advance understanding of the Earth System and to promote open sharing of information, the release said.

The two agencies have a history of scientific collaboration. In 2020, NASA, the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and European partners, including ESA, launched the Sentinel-6 Michael Freilich satellite, which is collecting the most accurate data yet on global sea level and how oceans are rising in response to climate change, the release added.

NASA has also announced plans for an Earth System Observatory, which will design a new set of missions linked to climate change, including disaster mitigation and fighting forest fires. The joint NASA-ESA statement complements those activities, according to the release.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

Ex-Republican Senator Jeff Flake Nominated to Serve as US Envoy to Turkey - White House

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden has nominated former Republican Senator Jeff Flake to serve as the next US Ambassador to Turkey, the White House said on Tuesday.

"Today, President Joe Biden announced his intent to nominate the following 11 individuals to serve in key roles: ... Jeff Lane Flake, Nominee for Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the Republic of Turkey," the White House said in a press release.

Flake said in a separate statement that he is honored to be nominated for the ambassadorial post given the strategic importance Turkey plays as a US ally.

Flake currently works as a distinguished fellow at Arizona State University and at Brigham Young University.

Flake previously served as a senator between 2013 to 2019 and as a Congressman from 2001 to 2013, during which time he served on the foreign relations committees for both chambers.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

## Homeland Security Secretary Urges Cubans, Haitians Not to Attempt to Travel to US

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas warned on Tuesday Cubans and Haitians against attempting to flee to the United States amid unrest in their home countries as the entry will be denied even if they survive the perilous sea voyage.

"Do not risk your life attempting to enter the United States illegally. You will not come to the United States," Mayorkas said during a press conference.

He added that the Department of Homeland Security does not see a surge in attempts to sail to the US from both Caribbean island nations but is well-positioned to address any increase.

"Individuals who take to the seas will actually not enter the United States, they are interdicted at sea, and they are repatriated to their countries of origin," Mayorkas said. The US denies entry even to those who face risks of persecution in their home states and sends them to third countries, he added.

Mayorkas told reporters that amid unrest in Haiti and Cuba the US Coast Guard deployed additional air assets to monitor the situation with greater visibility.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

## US Activists Walk 1,300 Miles to Washington to Demand End to Cuba Blockade - Supporter

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) – A group of US-based activists started a 1,300-mile rally from the city of Miami to the nation's capital in order to call on authorities in Washington, DC to lift the embargo on Cuba, participant Phil Wilayto said on Tuesday.

"Cuban-American activist Carlos Lazo and his group Puentes de Amor (Bridges of Love) are conducting a 1,300-mile walk from Miami to Washington, DC, where they will speak at a rally to demand an end to the U.S. blockade and travel restrictions imposed against Cuba," Wilayto, a founding member of the Defenders for Freedom, Justice & Equality, said in a statement provided to Sputnik.

On their way to the capital, the activists will stop in different cities to explain their position and urge Americans to support lifting Cuba-related limitations.

"The seven-member group will be stopping in Richmond on Monday, July 19, to speak on these issues and more at a public meeting," Wilayto added.

US restrictions on trade with Cuba date back to the island nation's communist revolution in the late 1950s and involve at least a half dozen different US laws. President Barack Obama took steps to normalize bilateral relations with the island, but many of those steps were reversed by the former administration of Donald Trump. Over the four years, the Trump administration added 243 new economic sanctions to toughen the embargo on Cuba.

On June 23, the United States voted against a UN General Assembly resolution condemning the embargo on Cuba, which was adopted by the overwhelming majority of 184 other nations.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

**US Newsroom Employment Falls 26% With 30,000 Jobs Lost Since 2008 - Report**

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) - Journalism jobs, especially in newspapers, in the United States have fallen 26 percent in the 12 year period ending in 2020, with declines somewhat tempered by increased employment in digital news organizations, a Pew Research Center report said on Tuesday.

"In 2008, there were about 114,000 total newsroom employees - reporters, editors, photographers and videographers – in five industries that produce news: newspaper, broadcast television, cable and 'other information services,'" the report said. "By 2020, that number had declined to about 85,000, a loss of about 30,000 jobs."

The bulk of the decline occurred in the first half of the 12-year period. Between 2008 and 2014, the number of newsroom employees dropped to 90,000, a loss of about 24,000 jobs. After 2014, the number of newsroom employees stabilized, with little change over the six-year period through 2020, the report said.

Newspaper newsroom employment fell 57 percent between 2008 and 2020, from roughly 71,000 jobs to about 31,000. At the same time, the number of digital newsroom employees rose 144%, from 7,400 workers in 2008 to about 18,000 in 2020, the report added.

Newsroom employment remained relatively steady at cable TV stations, between 2,000 and 3,000 employees over the same period. Radio broadcasting, however, lost 26 percent of its newsroom employees, dropping from about 4,600 workers in 2008 to about 3,400 by 2020, according to the report.

The Pew Research Center said it based the report on data collected by the US Bureau of Labor Statistics.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

**US DHS Sent 3 Individuals to Haiti to Assess Security Situation - Secretary**

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) - The US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) sent three individuals to Haiti as part of an interagency delegation to the country meant to provide support in the aftermath of the assassination of President Jovenel Moise, DHS Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas said on Tuesday.

"We at the Department of Homeland Security sent three individuals to really assess the security situation specifically – cybersecurity, port security, airport security – and we conducted that assessment and we stand at the ready to provide assistance," Mayorkas said during a news conference.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

Over 860 Defects Remain Unresolved in Lockheed Martin's F-35 Jet - Reports

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) - Defense contractor Lockheed Martin has still not resolved more than 860 software and hardware defects in the F-35 fighter jet since the completion of the development phase in April of 2018, Bloomberg reported on Tuesday.

All remaining 864 deficiencies are of varying severity and capable to undercut readiness, missions and maintenance of the aircraft, the report said citing Pentagon sources.

Over the course of the past months, Lockheed Martin managed to rectify eight defects out of 872 that were pending in March, the report cited as saying Government Accountability Office Director Jon Ludwigson.

"Deficiencies represent specific instances where the weapon system either does not meet requirements or where the safety, suitability, or effectiveness of the weapon system could be affected," Ludwigson said.

Lockheed Martin spokesman Brett Ashworth said seven defects that have critical impact of mission readiness and are currently awaiting government adjudication but neither of the flaws is considered to be potentially life-threatening, the report said.

Lockheed Martin will fail to deliver the planned 158 F-35 jets this year but projects to produce a higher number in 2022, the report added.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

US Still Evaluating Several Haiti's Requests for Assistance – State Dept.

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) – The United States is still reviewing a number of requests for assistance from the Haitian government and hasn't denied any, including for extra protection of critical infrastructure following the assassination of the country's leader, the State Department spokesman Ned Price told reporters on Tuesday.

"Right now we are evaluating a number of requests. We are evaluating how best we can support the needs of the Haitian government... I don't believe we have denied any requests right yet," Price said during a daily briefing.

He added that the focus is currently on the assistance with the ongoing investigation, but made it clear that the requests go beyond that.

"We know in this case that there may be needs for protection in the context of critical infrastructure. We are taking a closer look at that," Price added.

Haitian President Jovenel Moise was shot dead at his residence last week. His wife, Martine Moise, was wounded and airlifted to a US hospital. Law enforcement officers said that they identified 28 suspects and detained 17 of them.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

US Fiscal 2021 Budget Deficit at \$2.24 Trillion, Growing By \$174Bln in June - Treasury

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) - The US budget deficit stands at \$2.24 trillion in the first nine months of fiscal 2021, after growing by \$174 billion in June, the Treasury Department said in its monthly balance sheet reported on Tuesday.

Outlays for October to June amounted to \$5.29 trillion while receipts totaled \$3.06 trillion, resulting in the rounded-up deficit of \$2.24 trillion, according to the balance sheet.

The US budget deficit for all 2020 was \$3.13 trillion. The gap for the current year is growing at about the same pace, reaching 72 percent within nine months of the financial year.

The current deficit includes a \$900 billion COVID-19 bill passed under the Trump administration in November and an additional relief of \$1.9 trillion by the Biden administration in March.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

Biden Says Republicans Attempting 'Election Subversion' With New Voting Laws

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden said on Tuesday that Republican-led efforts to restrict voting rights are an attempt to subvert the integrity of US elections.

"To me, this is simple. It's election subversion," Biden said during remarks in Philadelphia. "It's the most dangerous threat to voting and the integrity of free and fair elections in our history."

This year, 17 states have enacted 28 new laws that make it harder for US citizens to vote, Biden said.

A group of more than 50 Texas Democrat lawmakers is currently in Washington, DC in an attempt to hamper voting on Republican legislation in Austin that would limit early voting hours, further restrict voting by mail, ban public officials from sending unsolicited absentee ballot applications, make it easier to overturn an election based on fraud allegations, among other things.

Former President Donald Trump's claims of voter fraud in the 2020 presidential election have pushed several Republican states to pass election reform legislation to prevent vote harvesting and other forms of potential abuse.

Several US election security agencies and the Justice Department disputed Trump's voter fraud allegations. The Trump campaign lost more than 60 lawsuits alleging voter fraud in a failed bid to reverse the 2020 election results.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

Kerry in Moscow Testing Prospects of US-Russia Cooperation on Climate - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) - US Special Envoy John Kerry's mission in Russia is to test the possibility for both countries' cooperation on the climate change challenge, the State Department's spokesman Ned Price told reporters on Tuesday.

"Secretary Kerry at the moment is testing the proposition as to whether we can work together on the global and existential challenge of climate change. Russia is one of the world's most prolific emitters and so Russia has a responsibility... to be ambitious in its climate targets," Price said during a daily briefing.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

US Negotiating Release of American Detainees in Iran Separately from JCPOA - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) - The US is engaging in active and indirect talks with Iran regarding the release of Americans who have been detained in the country separately from the negotiations related to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), State Department spokesperson Ned Price said on Tuesday.

"It is indirect but active discussions taking place to this end, seeing the release of the Americans who have been unjustly detained, deprived of their freedom for far too long now. We are treating the issue of detainees independently from discussions of the JCPOA," Price said during a press briefing.

There are currently four US nationals in Iranian detention.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

Bank CEO Convicted for Bribing Paul Manafort to Win Trump Admin Job - Justice Dept.

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) – A federal jury has unanimously convicted former Federal Savings Bank CEO Stephen Calk for corruptly seeking a position in the Trump administration in exchange for approving \$16 million in loans to Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort, the Department of Justice said on Tuesday.

"Audrey Strauss, US Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced today that ...Calk was convicted of financial institution bribery and conspiracy to commit financial institution bribery," the department said in a press release.

Calk used his position as head of a federally insured bank to issue millions of dollars in high-risk loans to Manafort in exchange for his placement on Trump's 2016 presidential campaign and to gain assistance from Manafort in trying to get a senior position with the incoming administration, the release said.

Calk was the chairman and chief executive officer of The Federal Savings Bank, a federal savings association based in Chicago and from June through August 2016, served as chairman of Trump's presidential campaign, the Justice Department noted.

Between July 2016 and January 2017, Manafort sought millions of dollars in loans from Calk's bank to terminate or avoid foreclosure proceedings on multiple properties owned by himself and his family, the Justice Department said.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

US State Dept. Following Reports on Georgian Journalist's Death, Calls For End to Violence

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) – The United States is closely following reports on the death of Georgian journalist Aleksandre (Lekso) Lashkarava, State Department spokesperson Ned Price told reporters, said on Tuesday.

Lashkarava was beaten while covering the July 5 anti-LGBT protest in Tbilisi. He was found dead at his home after spending several days in a hospital. The Georgian Interior Ministry said that his death could have been provoked by a drug overdose.

"We are closely following reports concerning his death," Price said. "We do call for calm and end to the violence that already caused one tragic loss of life."

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

US, Allies Can Build Technological Future Together - Sullivan

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) - The United States and its allies are capable of building a technological future together, US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said at the Global Emerging Technology Summit on Tuesday.

"At the end of the day, America united at home and with our friends can build the technological future ... for the United States and for our fellow democracies," Sullivan said during the summit organized by the National Security Committee on Artificial Intelligence.

Sullivan hailed the potential of the US-EU trade and technology council, which aims is to drive digital transformation and work together on new technologies. The technology council was agreed upon during the June 2021 EU-US summit.

The Global Emerging Technology Summit brings together officials from across the globe, as well as members of international organizations to discuss global technological and Artificial Intelligence trends.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

### Harris This Week to Meet Texas Lawmakers Blocking Republican Voting Bill - White House

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) - Vice President Kamala Harris will meet Texas Democrat lawmakers who fled to the US capitol to delay a vote on a Republican-proposed voting rights bill, White House Deputy Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said on Tuesday.

More than 50 Democrats from the Texas legislature arrived in Washington, DC on Monday night as part of their second attempt this summer to deny Republicans a quorum to pass the bill.

"Also this week, [the Vice] President will meet with the Texas legislators who broke quorum to block legislation that would have made it significantly harder for the people of Texas to vote," Jean-Pierre told reporters aboard Air Force One.

The Republican legislation would limit early voting hours, ban drive-through voting, further restrict voting by mail, ban public officials from sending unsolicited absentee ballot applications, make it easier to overturn an election based on fraud allegations, provide poll watchers more access where election activity is happening, among other things.

Jean-Pierre did not give any specifics about the upcoming meeting nor did she say whether President Joe Biden plans to meet with the Texas legislators as well.

The Texas special legislative session commenced on July 8 and can last no longer than 30 days. The group of Texas lawmakers plan to stay in Washington, DC, until the session is over.

Texas Governor Greg Abbott on Monday night urged the legislators to return to Austin to continue the special legislative session to pass the bill. Abbott explained Texas law calls for arresting legislators who abandon their duties, which is why the Democrat lawmakers left the state to block the passage of the measure, but may be arrested upon returning to Texas.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

### NASA Picks 3 Firms to Develop Nuclear Propulsion Plans For Deep Space Exploration

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) – Three US companies will receive grants of \$5 million each to develop conceptual designs for nuclear propulsion technology that could send spacecraft to Mars and beyond, NASA said on Tuesday.

"Nuclear propulsion provides greater propellant efficiency as compared with chemical rockets. It's a potential technology for crew and cargo missions to Mars and science missions to the outer solar system, enabling faster and more robust missions in many cases," NASA said in a press release.

NASA, in collaboration with the Energy Department's Idaho National Laboratory (INL), chose the three firms to receive \$5 million to develop plans for space-based nuclear reactors – BWX Technologies, General Atomics Electromagnetic Systems, and Ultra Safe Nuclear Technologies.

The proposed technology would use power from a reactor to heat a liquid propellant into gas, which would expand through a nozzle to provide thrust, the release said.

In theory, the systems could provide high thrust and twice the propellant efficiency of conventional rockets, according to NASA.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

**Businesses, Individuals Linked to China's Xinjiang Risk Violating US Law - State Dept.**

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) - The United States has updated its Supply Chain Business Advisory related to China's Xinjiang province, alleging potential risks related to human rights abuses of the predominantly Uyghur population, the US State Department said on Tuesday. "[The US] issued an updated Xinjiang Supply Chain Business Advisory to highlight the heightened risks for businesses with supply chain and investment links to Xinjiang, given the entities complicit in forced labor and other human rights abuses there and throughout China. This updates the original Xinjiang Supply Chain Business Advisory issued by US government agencies on July 1, 2020," the statement said.

The State Department also said that businesses and individuals who remain connected to Xinjiang risk violating US laws.

"Given the severity and extent of these abuses, businesses and individuals that do not exit supply chains, ventures, and/or investments connected to Xinjiang could run a high risk of violating US law," it said.

On Friday, the Biden administration added 14 Chinese companies and other entities to an economic blacklist over alleged human rights abuses and high-tech surveillance in Xinjiang. The administration said the Chinese government continues "horrific abuses" in Xinjiang and elsewhere "targeting Uyghurs, ethnic Kazakhs, and ethnic Kyrgyz who are predominantly Muslim, and members of other ethnic and religious minority groups."

Tuesday's move signals broader US government coordination over the enforcement of sanctions, with the Labor Department and the US Trade Representative's Office pulled into the effort. The State, Commerce, Homeland Security and Treasury departments were the first to roll out action against China's alleged abuse of Muslims in Xinjiang in July of 2020.

US Trade Representative Katherine Tai praised Canada, Mexico and other US partners for committing to ban the import of goods made with forced labor.

"I want to commend our allies for sending a clear sign that there is no place for forced labor in a fair, rules-based international trading system," Tai said in a statement.

According to the departments of State and Labor, several studies have documented more than one million Uyghurs, ethnic Kazakhs, and other Muslim minorities have been unjustly imprisoned in internment camps within the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.

China denies being engaged in any abuses and says it has established vocational training centers in Xinjiang to address religious extremism there.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

**US Looking for Ways to Support Cuban Protesters Consistently With Interests - State Dept.**

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) - The US is exploring different ways to aid the Cuban people amid protests in the country in ways that are consistent with American values and interests, State Department spokesperson Ned Price said on Tuesday.

"We are looking for ways that we might support the Cuban people in a way that's consistent with our interests, that's consistent with our values. We're of course doing that in the midst of these protests," Price said during a press briefing.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

US to Announce New Action on Ransomware Attacks Later This Week - Sullivan

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration will announce new action to combat ransomware attacks later this week followed by additional measures to increase cyber resilience, US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said on Tuesday.

"Later this week we will be announcing new actions on ransomware followed next week by further announcements on steps we are taking to improve our cyber resilience here in the United States," Sullivan said during a conference organized by the National Security Committee on Artificial Intelligence.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

US Provides Nearly \$400M In for Small Rural Hospitals to Battle COVID-19 - Health Dept.

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) - More than 1,500 hospitals located in rural US communities will receive \$398 million to expand COVID-19 testing and other pandemic mitigation measures, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) said on Tuesday.

"Hospitals will use the funds to maintain or increase COVID-19 testing, expand access to testing for rural residents, and tailor mitigation efforts to reflect the needs of local communities," HHS said in a press release.

The funding provided by the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan will be available to 1,540 hospitals, typically those with fewer than 50 beds that are located in rural areas, the release said.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

Colombia Working With Interpol on Haitian President's Killing Probe - Foreign Minister

UNITED NATIONS, July 13 (Sputnik) - Colombian Foreign Minister Marta Lucia Ramirez said on Tuesday her country was cooperating with Interpol on the investigation into the assassination of Haitian President Jovenel Moise.

Haitian officials said 26 Colombians and two US citizens were suspects in Moise's assassination last week. The National Police of Colombia said on Monday three Colombians had been killed by the Haitian forces.

"We are helping Interpol in order to have all the information: the track record about the time when they leave Colombia, all the information about their communications, everything in order to clarify this horrible crime," Ramirez told reporters.

"Everybody who is involved, everybody who has a physical or intellectual actor of this crime must be punished and must be punished with an extreme and very high a capacity of the justice, international justice and the Colombian justice and others," she added.

The head of Moise's security guard, Dimitri Herard, reportedly often traveled to Colombia and is expected to explain his frequent trips to Ecuador with stopovers in Bogota during an upcoming interrogation this week.

Moise was shot dead at his private residence last week. His wife suffered an abdominal injury during the attack and was airlifted to a hospital in Miami for treatment.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

**Trudeau Says Over Half of Canadians Fully Vaccinated, Nearly 80% Received at Least 1 Dose**

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) – Over half of Canadians eligible to get vaccinated against the COVID-19 are fully immunized, while nearly 80 percent have received at least one dose, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said on Tuesday.

"Almost 80 percent eligible Canadians have now received their first dose and more than 50 percent have received their second dose," Trudeau said during a press briefing.

According to Our World in Data, Canada is among the world leaders for first doses administered, however, ranks just 35th for fully vaccinated individuals.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

**Trudeau Says Canada to Support Cubans' Desire for Greater Peace, Stability, Voice**

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) - Canada will support the Cuban people's desire for greater peace, stability and input into the island nation's affairs, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said on Tuesday.

Thousands of Cubans took to the streets on Sunday demanding free elections and the resolution of social issues. According to local media, protests and gatherings took place in eight

Cuban cities, including Havana. In response, government and Communist Party supporters held their own marches.

"We will continue to be there to support Cubans in their desire for greater peace, greater stability and greater voice in how things are going," Trudeau said during a press briefing.

Trudeau noted that Canada has always supported Cubans' ambition for freedom and human rights in the island nation.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

UNICEF Head Henrietta Fore Decides to Step Down Over Family-Health Issue - UN Spokesman

UNITED NATIONS, July 13 (Sputnik) - United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Executive Director Henrietta Fore informed UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres about her intention to resign due to a family-health issue, UN spokesman Farhan Haq said in a press briefing on Tuesday.

"Henrietta Fore, UNICEF's Executive Director, has informed the Secretary-General of her intention to resign to devote herself to a family-health issue," Haq said.

Appointed in 2018, Fore will stay in her position until a successor is appointed, Haq said.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

Boeing Says Less Than Half of 787 Jets in Stock to Be Delivered in 2021 Due to New Problem  
WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) - Aircraft manufacturer Boeing said on Tuesday that it has discovered a new issue with its 787 Dreamliner wide-body aircraft that will require fixes resulting in less than half of the airplanes in stock being delivered this year.

"The company has been engaged in detailed discussions with the FAA [Federal Aviation Administration] on verification methodology for 787 fuselages, and conducting associated inspections and rework," Boeing said in a statement. "As that work is performed, the 787 production rate will temporarily be lower than five per month and will gradually return to that rate. Boeing now expects to deliver fewer than half of the 787s currently in inventory this year." In May, US Congress sought records from Boeing and the Federal Aviation Administration about production problems on the 787 and the 737 MAX airplanes.

The 737 MAX jets were grounded worldwide and deliveries were halted after two deadly crashes. They resumed flying late last year after Boeing made changes to a flight-control system that played a role in the accidents.

Boeing's two-aisle 787 jet is popular for longer route travel. However, deliveries of the aircraft were halted first in 2020 and again in May to fix production problems affecting how pieces of the carbon-fiber fuselage are joined as well as how the planes are inspected.

The new problem with the 787 jet was found on a part called the forward pressure bulkhead - a dome-shaped structure in the nose that keeps the interior of the airplane pressurized.

"Based on our assessment of the time required to complete this work, Boeing is re-prioritizing production resources for a few weeks to support the inspection and rework," Boeing said.

The company noted that it had delivered 14 units of the 787 jet this year of which 12 in the second quarter alone.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

**UNSC Not Expected to Take Any Immediate Steps on Haiti's Troops Request - Source**

United Nations, July 13 (Sputnik) - The UN Security Council is not expected to take any immediate steps regarding Haiti's request for United Nations peacekeepers, a diplomatic source told RIA Novosti on Tuesday.

Last week, Haiti sent letters to the United Nations and the United States requesting that they urgently deploy troops to help secure the country after the assassination of President Jovenel Moise.

"We shouldn't expect any steps by the Security Council in response to the letter by Haiti authorities in the immediate future. The Security Council will take its time, will study all details carefully," the source said.

The office of UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres told Sputnik that the United Nations had received Haiti's request for assistance and was considering the request.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

**Suspect Arrested in Haiti Was 'Confidential Source' for US Drug Agency – DEA to Sputnik**

WASHINGTON, July 12 (Sputnik) – One suspect arrested in connection with the assassination of Haitian President Jovenel Moise was a "confidential source" of the US Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), a DEA spokesperson told Sputnik on Tuesday.

"One suspect was a DEA confidential source," the spokesperson said.

In a separate statement sent to Sputnik, a DEA official urged the source to hand himself over to the authorities and that Washington aided Port-au-Prince in apprehending the suspect.

"A DEA official assigned to Haiti urged the suspect to surrender to local authorities and, along with a U.S. State Department official, provided information to the Haitian government that assisted in the surrender and arrest of the suspect and one other individual," the statement read.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

**Texas Democrat Lawmakers Staying in US Capitol for Weeks to Block Republican Voting Bill**

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) - Texas Democrat lawmakers will remain in the US capitol for several weeks to block the upcoming Republican voting rights bill, Texas House Democratic Caucus Chairman Chris Turner said on Tuesday.

More than 50 Democrats from the Texas legislature arrived in Washington, DC on Monday night as part of their second attempt this summer to deny Republicans a quorum to pass the rights bill.

"Our intent is to stay out and kill this bill, this session, and use the intervening time - I think 24, 25 days now before the end of this session - to implore the folks in this building behind us to pass federal voting rights legislation to protect voters in Texas and across the country," Turner said during a press conference outside of the US Capitol building.

The Republican legislation would limit early voting hours, ban drive-through voting, further restrict voting by mail, ban public officials from sending unsolicited absentee ballot applications, make it easier to overturn an election based on fraud allegations, provide poll watchers more access where election activity is happening, among other things.

US Senators Chuck Schumer, Cory Booker, Alex Padilla and Kirsten Gillibrand are expected to meet with the Texas lawmakers later on Tuesday for talks about the bill.

Texas Governor Greg Abbott on Monday night urged the legislators to return to Austin to continue the special legislative session to pass the bill. Abbott explained Texas law calls for arresting legislators who abandon their duties, which is they have left the state, but added they may be arrested upon returning to Texas.

Abbott previously said he would call a special session to get the bill passed before the fall after Democrats blocked the bill from passage in May. The Texas special legislative session commenced on July 8 and can last no longer than 30 days.

Former President Donald Trump's claims of voter and election fraud in the 2020 presidential election has prompted several Republican-ruled states to pass election reform legislation to prevent vote harvesting and other forms of potential abuse.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

**US Climate Envoy Kerry Thanks Russian Counterpart Edelgeriyev for Productive Discussion**

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) - US Special Envoy for Climate John Kerry on Tuesday thanked Russian Presidential Representative for Climate Issues Ruslan Edelgeriyev for a productive discussion on climate action during an official visit to Moscow.

"Thank you to my Russian counterpart Special Presidential Representative for Climate Issues Ruslan Edelgeriyev for a productive discussion on raising climate ambition, including opportunities and challenges in energy, forests, and other issues," Kerry said in a statement. Kerry will remain in Moscow until Thursday for climate discussions, the highest level Biden administration delegation to visit Russia so far.

On Monday, Kerry met Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, who said the US special envoy's visit was "an important and positive signal" for the relationship between Washington and Moscow and could help with "defusing tensions" and building cooperation in the areas where the two countries can find common ground.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

US Lowers COVID-19 Travel Advisory for Germany, Austria to 'Exercise Increased Caution'

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) - The United States has issued updated travel advisories for Germany and Austria, saying that the citizens who travel to these countries should "exercise increased caution," the US State Department said on Tuesday.

"This week, the following Travel Advisories have been assessed and reissued with updates, lowered to a Level 2 – Exercise Increased Caution. Armenia. Austria. Bulgaria. Czech Republic. Germany. Serbia," the statement said.

Previous US advisory notes said that Austria and Germany were on Level 3 which meant that Washington asked the citizens to reconsider travel to these countries due to COVID-19.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

Two US Police Officers Hospitalized After Baltimore Shooting, Suspect Dead - Police Dept.

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) - Two law enforcement officers have been wounded in a shooting this morning in Baltimore, Maryland, while one suspect has been hospitalized and later pronounced dead, Baltimore County Police Department said on Tuesday.

"Active scene at Security Square Mall where earlier two law enforcement officers were injured. One suspect has been transported to the hospital as well as the members of law enforcement," the country police said in a tweet.

At this moment, the county police and detectives are on the scene of a shooting that occurred this morning in the parking lot near the 6900 block of Security Boulevard, according to the department.

Later on Tuesday, the police department in a tweet said the suspect was pronounced dead after he suffered at least one gunshot wound.

Rampant gun violence across the US in recent months leaves dozens dead and injured on a daily basis, with police officers commonly getting caught in the line of fire. Last week, two

federal agents of the US Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives and one police officer were non-fatally shot while conducting an investigation in Chicago, Illinois.

Earlier in July, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo declared a state of emergency in his state in an effort to curb the number of shootings and murders.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

#### Death Toll in Florida Condominium Building Collapse Increases to 95 - Mayor

WASHINGTON, July 12 (Sputnik) - Authorities in the US state of Florida recovered one additional victim of the condominium building collapse in Surfside, the death toll increased to 95, Miami-Dade county Mayor Daniella Levine Cava told reporters on Tuesday.

"Our teams have recovered an additional victim. The number of confirmed deaths is now 95," Cava said during a press briefing. "Eighty-five of these victims have been identified."

Cava noted that the authorities have so far been able to account for 238 residents of the building, but 14 individuals are still unaccounted for.

On June 24, the 12-story Champlain Towers South residential building partially collapsed trapping the residents in the rubble. The authorities have so far not conclusively determined the cause of the collapse.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

#### Northrop Grumman Begins Building Hypersonic Weapons Design, Production Factory - Statement

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) - A US hypersonic weapons complex now under construction will provide full lifecycle production for a new class of projectiles with the speed needed to defeat defensive systems, Northrop Grumman said on Tuesday.

"The new 60,000-square foot facility will feature state-of-the-art production technology and will implement digital engineering best practices that will result in increased agility and the ability to respond to changes in technology or customer mission needs quickly," Northrop Grumman said in a press release.

Construction of the facility in the US state of Maryland is expected to finish by 2023, the release said.

Hypersonic missiles travel between five and 20 times the speed of sound - speeds capable of overwhelming existing missile defense technology.

The United States recently prioritized the development of hypersonic weapons following successful tests of missiles using the technology by both Russia and China.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

**US Military Withdrawal From Afghanistan More Than 95% Complete - Central Command**

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) - The US troop withdrawal from Afghanistan is more than 95 percent complete, US Central Command (CENTCOM) said on Tuesday.

"US Central Command estimates that we have completed more than 95% of the entire withdrawal process," CENTCOM said in a release.

President Joe Biden has said that he expects the withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan to be completed by August 31. However, the official deadline was set for September 11, the 20th anniversary of the terrorist attacks on the United States that sparked the war.

The Defense Department recently transferred leadership of the US troops in Afghanistan to CENTCOM Commander Gen. Frank McKenzie. Defense officials have said McKenzie will retain the same authorities as his predecessor, including the ability to direct airstrikes against the Taliban or against other threats.

The Taliban movement (banned in Russia) has been gaining ground in Afghanistan and now controls 85 percent of the country. Pierre Henrot, security consultant and former UN observer, told Sputnik last week that the Afghan government is unlikely to be able to retain control the country after the US departure.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

**Canada Urges Haiti to Hold Elections by Year's End – Top Diplomat**

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) – Canada's Foreign Minister Marc Garneau, in a conversation with Haiti's interim Prime Minister Claude Joseph, stressed the need for elections in the Caribbean country by the end of the year, Global Affairs Canada said on Tuesday.

"Minister Garneau encouraged interim Prime Minister Joseph to engage in a dialogue with all parties to develop a credible plan for the Haitian government to hold elections by the end of the year, as democratic renewal is a stepping stone to lasting peace and stability for the Haitian people," Global Affairs Canada said in a readout of the conversation.

Garneau highlighted Ottawa's concern with the increasing levels of violence in Haiti, urging Joseph to ensure Haitians have access to basic goods and services and that humanitarian aid is able to get on the ground.

Canada's top diplomat reiterated Ottawa's condemnation of the assassination of Haitian President Jovenel Moise and doubled down on international calls for an investigation.

Moise was shot dead at his residence last week. His spouse, Martine Moise, was wounded and airlifted to a hospital in Florida. Her condition is deemed as stable. Authorities have identified at least 28 suspects involved in the assassination, including three US citizens. According to the police, 17 criminal group members have so far been detained.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

US Renews Warning to Businesses of Risks of Exposure to Supply Chains in Xinjiang

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) - The United States has renewed its supply chain business advisory related to China's Xinjiang province, which has a predominantly Uyghur population, alleging potential risks related to human rights abuses, the State Department said on Tuesday. " [The US] issued an updated Xinjiang Supply Chain Business Advisory to highlight the heightened risks for businesses with supply chain and investment links to Xinjiang, given the entities complicit in forced labor and other human rights abuses there and throughout China. This updates the original Xinjiang Supply Chain Business Advisory issued by U.S. government agencies on July 1, 2020," the statement said.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

All Websites Associated With Hacking Group REvil Are Down - CNBC

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) - All the websites associated with the cybercriminal group REvil are down, CNBC reported citing multiple sources on Tuesday. The report said multiple cybersecurity experts confirmed that all known websites associated with REvil are down. Last week, the White House said the United States would take action against REvil in response to the ransomware attack against the IT management software company Kaseya, which affected a number of US companies.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

UPDATE - US Inflation Gauge CPI up 5.4% in Year to June, up Most Since 2008 - Labor Dept

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) - The US Consumer Price Index, a measure of inflation, grew by 5.4 percent over a one-year period in June for its largest increase in 13 years, the Labor Department announced on Tuesday. "Over the last 12 months, the all items index increased 5.4 percent before seasonal adjustment," the department said, breaking down the data, popularly known by its acronym CPI. "This was the largest 12-month increase since a 5.4-percent increase for the period ending August 2008."

The CPI typically measures what consumers pay for goods and services, including clothes, groceries, restaurant meals, recreational activities and vehicles.

The so-called core reading of the CPI, that is stripped of often-volatile food and energy prices, grew 4.5 percent in the year to June.

The Federal Reserve's preferred inflation gauge — the core PCE, or Personal Consumption Expenditures Index, which also leaves out food and energy prices, rose by a multiyear high of 3.4 percent in the 12 months to May.

Economists polled by US media forecast a 4.9 percent year-on-year growth in gross CPI for June, putting the 5.4 percent reported by the Labor Department well above their target.

Some questioned the logic of certain components of the CPI, such as used cars prices, which supposedly rose 45.2 percent year-on-year.

"You're telling me a used car from last June that was selling for \$20,000 is now getting nearly \$30,000!?" economist Adam Button wrote in apparent disbelief on the FX Live forum.

The US economy shrank by 3.5 percent in 2020 due to lockdowns imposed by the COVID-19. Since the start of this year, growth has exceeded expectations, with a first quarter expansion of 6.4 percent.

The Fed, however, has been grappling with soaring inflation as prices have ballooned across the board from the lows of the pandemic.

Commodity-fueled inflation has become a hot-button issue in the United States since vaccine breakthroughs for the COVID-19 in November unleashed price rallies in most raw materials amid forecasts for rapid economic recovery from the pandemic. Constraints in supply chains seeing explosive demand after months of lax activity have added to the upward price pressure in most commodities.

The White House said last week that monopoly by players in key US industries has also led to tripling mark-ups in prices of necessities such as prescription drugs, hearing aids and internet service.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

**Two Officers Hospitalized After Morning Shooting in Baltimore - Police Dept.**

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) - Two law enforcement officers have been wounded in a shooting this morning in Baltimore, Maryland, while one of suspects has been hospitalized, Baltimore County Police Department said on Tuesday.

"Active scene at Security Square Mall where earlier two law enforcement officers were injured. One suspect has been transported to the hospital as well as the members of law enforcement," the county police said in a tweet.

At this moment, the county police and detectives are on the scene of a shooting that occurred this morning in the parking lot near the 6900 block of Security Boulevard, according to the department.

Last week, two federal agents of the US Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives and one police officer were non-fatally shot while conducting an investigation in Chicago, Illinois.

Earlier in July, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo declared a state of emergency in his state in an effort to curb the number of shootings and murders.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

**IMF Says Holds Productive Meetings With Argentine Authorities to Advance Support Program**

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) - The International Monetary Fund (IMF) said on Tuesday that its staff held productive discussions with the Argentine authorities on moving forward the work towards the fund-supported program.

"The Argentine authorities and IMF staff held productive meetings to further advance the technical work towards an IMF-supported program," the statement said. "The IMF team and the Argentine authorities will continue working together in the period ahead with a view to further deepening their understandings in these key areas. Our goal is to support Argentina as it durably addresses its economic and balance of payment challenges."

The IMF noted that the teams addressed the global environment, the COVID-19 pandemic and their implications for "Argentina's macroeconomic framework. Discussions focused on policies to strengthen the recovery, economic stability, and job creation," the statement said.

"In particular, progress was made in identifying policy options to develop the domestic capital market, mobilize domestic revenue, and strengthen Argentina's external resilience," it went on to say.

The IMF team was led by Julie Kozack, Deputy Director of the Western Hemisphere Department, and Luis Cubeddu, mission chief for Argentina, while Argentina's Economy Minister Martin Guzmán and his team represented the Argentine side, according to the statement.

The meetings took place on July 8-12 in Venice, Italy.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

**India Expands Maritime Reconnaissance With Delivery of 10th Surveillance Aircraft – Boeing**

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) – India took delivery of the tenth P-8 maritime surveillance aircraft, expanding the nation's anti-submarine warfare capabilities, Boeing said on Tuesday.

"This is the second aircraft to be delivered under an option contract for four additional aircraft that the Indian Ministry of Defense awarded in 2016," Boeing said in a press release.

Boeing supports India's growing P-8I fleet by providing training of Indian Navy flight crews, spare parts, ground support equipment and field service representative support, the release said.

The support includes construction of a training and maintenance center for Indian Navy crews, now nearing completion, to provide ground-based instruction as additional surveillance aircraft becomes available, the release added.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia,**

**IMF Says Holds Productive Meetings With Argentine Authorities to Advance Support Program**

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) - The International Monetary Fund (IMF) said on Tuesday that its staff held productive discussions with the Argentine authorities on moving forward the work towards the fund-supported program.

"The Argentine authorities and IMF staff held productive meetings to further advance the technical work towards an IMF-supported program," the statement said. "The IMF team and the Argentine authorities will continue working together in the period ahead with a view to further deepening their understandings in these key areas. Our goal is to support Argentina as it durably addresses its economic and balance of payment challenges."